

LIFE OF THE LAND

Ua Mau Ke Ea O Ka 'Aina I Ka Pono

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Attention: Honolulu High-Capacity Transit Corridor Project
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Aloha,

Life of the Land is Hawai'i's own environmental and community action group advocating for the people and the 'aina since 1970. Our mission is to preserve and protect the life of the land through sustainable land use and energy policies and by promoting open government through research, education, advocacy, and litigation.

The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) publishes analysis of what is required within a federal Environmental Impact Statement (See: CEQ Top 40 NEPA Questions: <http://ceq.eh.doe.gov/nepa/regs/40/40p3.htm>). Specifically, the discussion on alternatives is very, very important. In previous iterations of proposals to expand transportation options of O'ahu, short shrift was given to these federal requirements. (Specifically, please review: CEQ Top 40 NEPA Questions: 1a. Range of Alternatives, 1b. How many alternatives have to be discussed when there is an infinite number of possible alternatives?, 2a. Alternatives Outside the Capability of Applicant or Jurisdiction of Agency, 2b. Must the EIS analyze alternatives outside the jurisdiction or capability of the agency or beyond what Congress has authorized?)

Transportation Expansion, Population Growth, and New Developments are intertwined. In it impossible to think about one without seeing how it impacts the others. Sometimes it occurs in intended ways, when all three are planned together. Sometimes it occurs in unintended ways, when government agencies approve new developer-initiated sprawl because the newly expanded transportation system can handle additional cars.

Hawai'i's government is urban, and has not been able to control growth in outlying areas, nor to protect prime agricultural lands. Will the various transportation plans lead to run-away growth?

If the population rises by 2% a year, then the population doubles every 36 years. Thus a average 2% population growth rate will mean that O`ahu's population in 2200 will be 32,000,000. Absurd perhaps, but shouldn't we have time to talk about carrying capacity, development without growth, and other big-picture items at some time, rather than putting it off for a future generation?

Life of the Land would like to see a realistic analysis of how alternative scenarios for enhanced modes of transportation play out on the development and population fronts.

The analysis should include not merely growth in general, but the types of growth (gentleman farms, golf courses, affordable houses, homelessness), that are reasonable to expect.

There are areas of the island, such as surf sites/windsurfing sites/ personal water crafts/jet skis/snorkeling/fishing/tourism/ sites that are under threat from too many competing uses. How will the growth in transportation/population/development affect those areas which can not be expanded upon?

Many people want to bicycle, but fear bicycle-car interactions. One of our Board Members was hit from behind by a drunk driver in the downtown area. Will the proposed alternatives increase or decrease the ability of bicyclists to navigate downtown and in other areas? Will the transportation plan work in sync with, parallel with, or ignore the Honolulu Bicycle Master Plan? Are vehicle-pedestrian interactions more or less likely under each alternative?

Will the building of new transportation projects lead to greater homogenization of communities, where each one look the same?

Why were the proposed routes selected? Would two or three routes work better than one. Airport/Aloha Stadium; UH/Waikiki; Ewa/UH? How would each route be measured to determine what impact it would have?

What would be the impact from an Airport/Aloha Stadium Route? What would be the rider-ship from a line providing service within the Honolulu International Airport and ending at Aloha Stadium? Would such a line provide better security at the airport, allow for faster and more efficient airport service, and decrease the cost of people having to park at the airport? If the rail system were to occupy two existing lanes at the airport, providing high speed transportation to Aloha Stadium, with its abundant parking, would this free up the highways for other uses?

Would providing three local rail or bus lines (Kapolei, Airport/Aloha Stadium, Waikiki/UH) connected by one very express line with just 4-7 total stops provide better service?

What would be the impact of developing a high-speed coastal system on-grade/below grade system with just 6 stops: Kapolei, Ewa, Airport, Sand Island, Ala Moana, Ala Wai Golf Course? Couldn't this go on existing right-of-ways?

What if the car pool lane had a minimum speed of 65 mph and a maximum speed of 75 mph, and was restricted to buses and car-pools of 4 people or more? Wouldn't the sight of a largely empty but fast moving traffic encourage greater car-pooling?

How will the proposed system be powered? By new fossil fuel power plants and ugly transmission lines, or distributed renewable energy? Please explain this in detail.

How will view-planes (mountains, ocean) be affected? The Blue View may be defined as those who are able to see the ocean from where they live and/or work. The Mountain View may be defined as those who are able to see mountains from where they live and/or work. How will proposed infrastructures affect these aesthetic values?

Will the new line connect major shopping centers and governmental facilities (Pearl Ridge Shopping Center, Aloha Stadium, Aloha Tower, UH Medical School, UH), or will the route go to proposed new developments? Are the particular routes being chosen to maximize particular future developments?

Through what types of communities will the new line be built (income, race, etc).

Mahalo

Henry Curtis
Executive Director